'Rejoice Sion, Mother of all Churches': Christianity in the Holy Land during the Byzantine Era

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The Apogee of Christianity: Lights and Shadows

No other relic of late antique Palestine can compete with the mosaic map of Madaba as a witness to the Christianity of the Holy Land during the Byzantine era. It is indeed its most vivid and eloquent icon.[1] As a pictorial description of the Holy Places, probably drawn in the middle of the sixth century and especially directed to the pilgrims on their way to Palestine, the map combines biblical geography with the actual presence of the Christian Church. Though taking into account the perceptible propensity of the artist to *horror vacui*, the tight web of figures and inscriptions covering almost every spot of the landscape credibly presents us with the picture of a thriving urban and rural life having its centre in the 'Holy City of Jerusalem'. Finally, looking from a bird's-eye view at the Holy City itself, we observe therein the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the focus that commands the whole urban topography up to the point of obliterating the traces of the Temple and the city's Jewish past.[2] In

[1] Cf. M. Piccirillo, *Madaba: le chiese e i mosaici*, ed. by E. Alliata (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano, 1989), pp. 76–95; H. Donner, *The Mosaic Map of Madaba: An Introductory Guide* (Kampen, 1992); and especially the proceedings of the centenary conference: *The Madaba Map Centenary 1897–1997*, ed. by M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata (Jerusalem, 1999).

[2] Y. Tsafrir, 'Byzantine Jerusalem: The Configuration of a Christian City', in *Jerusalem — Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. by L. I. Levine (New York, 1999), pp. 133–50 (pp. 143–44).

this way, when facing the colourful mirror of this mosaic, one is unmistakably led to participate in a celebration of Christianity in its 'Holy Land'.

There certainly are many reasons allowing us to open on a triumphant note when we approach the history of Christianity during this period. Apart perhaps from the last two centuries, it is the best-known phase in the long history of the Church in the Holy Land.[3] To the considerable amount and variety of literary sources, though mainly of ecclesiastical nature, that have come down to us we should add the rich materials provided by archaeological research.[4] Relying on this evidence, historical studies have contributed more and more, especially in the last two decades, to widening our perspective on Byzantine Christianity and its close context. To mention just a few instances, historians have dealt with the gradual rise of Christianity as the majority religion within a multiethnic and multireligious society, particularly investigating the emergence of Palestine as a 'Holy Land' for Christians and the ensuing growth of pilgrimage.[5] Further attention has been paid to bringing forth the distinctive profile of monastic life, thus leading to what we should probably recognize as the most novel and enriching contribution: a monasticism rediscovered both in its physical setting and in its connections with the ecclesiastical and social life of the time.[6]

[3] For a historiographical evaluation, see my review of F. Heyer, *Kirchengeschichte des Heiligen Landes* (Stuttgart, 1984), now in a revised edition under the title *2000 Jahre Kirchengeschichte des Heiligen Landes: Märtyrer, Mönche, Kirchenväter, Kreuzfahrer, Patriarchen, Ausgräber und Pilger* (Münster, 2000): 'Per la storia della Palestina cristiana: La "Storia della chiesa di Terra Santa" di Friedrich Heyer', *Cristianesimo nella storia*, 7 (1986), 141–65.

[4] Having regard to their importance one may be tempted to invert the traditional roles between literary sources and archaeological materials, as suggested, e.g., by G. Stemberger, 'Jewish-Christian Contacts in Galilee (Fifth to Seventh Centuries)', in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land — First–Fifteenth Centuries CE*, ed. by A. Kofsky and G. G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 131–46; in his opinion, archaeological materials would give us 'a sense of continuity and change which our literary sources never convey' (p. 132). Yet this seems to fit with the particular situation of Galilee and the Jewish–Christian interaction in that region, and is not applicable as a general criterion for Byzantine Palestine.

[5] P. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 1990); R. L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven, 1992).

[6] I would like to mention, among many other scholars, Y. Hirschfeld, *The Judaean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* (New Haven, 1992); J. Patrich, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism: A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries* (Washington, 1995); and the epigraphic and historiographical contributions of L. Di Segni. See

Moreover, important facets of the inner life of the Church in its liturgical, theological, or spiritual expressions, long the object of study, have attracted new investigations on the part of the scholars.[7] Therefore, we could reasonably assume that we nowadays are in a better position to engage in a general reconstruction of Byzantine Christianity in the Holy Land.

Yet, as a preliminary caution, it is better to warn against too hasty optimism. As is the case with the Madaba map — replete with Old Testament sites but surprisingly silent on important aspects of contemporary Christianity — various features of the Christian history of our period still await more accurate description, including monasticism, its most patent and accessible phenomenon.[8] Concerning less-known chapters such as, for example, the spread of Christianity during the centuries of the Byzantine era, we are unavoidably bound to more or less hypothetical conclusions.[9] Also, the theological controversies that from time to time troubled the Church of Palestine, already beginning in the fourth century and continuing almost without interruption until the eve of the Arab conquest, are far from having delivered all their secrets, despite the fact that both the first and second Origenist crises have stimulated important investigations.[10]

also J. Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ: The Monasteries of Palestine, 314–631* (Oxford, 1994), and my remarks in 'Aspects of Palestinian Monasticism in Byzantine Time: Some Comments and Proposals', in *Patterns of the Past, Prospects for the Future: The Christian Heritage of the Holy Land*, ed. by T. Hummel, K. Hintlian, and U. Carmesund (London, 1999), pp. 264–72. See also the article by B. Bitton-Ashkelony and A. Kofsky in this volume.

[7] Particularly in the domain of liturgical research, as shown by the contributions of C. Renoux devoted to the organization of the Jerusalem liturgy and its spread throughout Eastern Christianity; see lately, *Les hymnes de la Résurrection*. I: *Hymnographie liturgique géorgienne* (Paris, 2000), esp. pp. 30–64. See also S. Verhelst, *Les traditions judéo-chrétiennes dans la liturgie de Jérusalem, spécialement la Liturgie de saint Jacques frère de Dieu* (Leuven, 2003).

[8] L. Di Segni, 'Monk and Society: The Case of Palestine', in *The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present*, ed. by J. Patrich (Leuven, 2001), pp. 31–36 (p. 31). Surprisingly enough the Madaba map ignores the monastic foundations, or at least it does not single them out in the preserved portion of the mosaic.

[9] As a corollary, we may recall the caution recommended by Di Segni (ibid., p. 35) when having recourse to the altogether invaluable maps of Y. Tsafrir, L. Di Segni, and J. Green, *Tabula Imperii Romani: Iudaea — Palaestina: Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods — Maps and Gazetteer* (with contributions by I. Roll and T. Tsuk) (Jerusalem, 1994).

[10] Cf. E. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1993); D. Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy: A New Perspective on Cyril of Scythopolis' Monastic Biographies as Historical Sources for Sixth-Century Origenism* (Roma, 2001).

As a consequence of this state of things, our exposition — rather than being able to draw a comprehensive mosaic — can often trace only a path through a religious landscape still to be regarded, at least to some extent, as a *terra incognita*.

A Distinctive Religious Landscape within the Byzantine Empire

As one of the eastern regions subject to the power of Byzantium, Palestine possessed a physiognomy of its own, distinguished from the neighbouring countries of Egypt and Syria both from the political and the religious point of view. While in the first three centuries of the Roman era it had undergone dramatic events and significant changes in its political autonomy, the period of Byzantine domination is characterized by a substantial stability favouring the economic and social development of the country. This probably reached its apex before the middle of the sixth century, when the bubonic plague of 541–542 inflicted a severe demographic blow.[11] The final division of the territory into three provinces, which took place around the end of the fourth century, may be seen as a sign pointing to the multiform articulations within the body of the country.[12] As a matter of fact, politically there is no single city effacing its surrounding countryside, as did for instance Alexandria with Egypt. Caesarea Maritima, the capital city since Herod's times, now the centre of the province Palaestina Prima, is not the unique *metropolis*, and its importance is balanced not only by the two other provincial capitals, Scythopolis (Palaestina Secunda) and Petra (Palaestina Tertia), but especially by Aelia Capitolina–Jerusalem, a religious centre of international renown and the fourth patriarchate of the East.[13] Besides,

[11] See M. Broshi, 'The Population of Western Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine Period', *BASOR*, 236 (1979), 1–10, and the comments of Y. Tsafrir, in *Tabula Imperii Romanii*, pp. 18–19, with a suggested figure of 'about one million people in western Palestine'.

[12] K. G. Holum, 'Palestine', *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1991), III, 1563–64; L. Di Segni, 'The Involvement of Local Municipal and Provincial Authorities in Urban Building', in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research*, ed. by J. H. Humphrey, 3 vols, JRA Supp. Ser., 14, 31, 49 (Ann Arbor, MI, and Portsmouth, RI, 1995–2002), I, 312–32 (p. 318). For a still helpful general presentation see M. Avi-Yonah, 'Palaestina', *RE*, Supp. vol. 13 (München, 1974), pp. 321–454.

[13] For an assessment of the dynamics between capital city and provincial district see L. Di Segni, 'Metropolis and Provincia in Byzantine Palestine', in *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia*, ed. by A. Raban and K. G. Holum (Leiden, 1996), pp. 575–89.

as impressively shown by the Madaba map, there are plenty of towns, some of them even of considerable size, and often bordered by a large network of villages.

The political geography of Byzantine Palestine with its plurality of places and actors may help us to better understand a similar trait appearing in its religious geography. The territory running north to south from Galilee to the Negev, and east to west from the mountains of Moab to the Mediterranean shore, which approximately sums up the extent of Byzantine Palestine,[14] had for many centuries been far from a religiously homogeneous landscape. This was still the case at the beginning of the Byzantine era, during which the Christianization of Palestine gradually took a triumphant run. Yet even this major change did not completely transform the pre-existing situation. Jews, Samaritans, and a pagan population composed of inhabitants of Greek or Semitic origins would continue for a while to live and partially prosper next to Christians, now essentially recruited among the population of Gentile provenance, while only a tiny minority of Judaeo-Christians still clung to the 'Church of the Circumcision'.[15] These Judaeo-Christians, called Nazoreans by our sources, seem to have slowly been absorbed by the Great Church in the course of the fourth century, if not later.[16]

To recall this state of things we may have recourse to the alarm-cries of ecclesiastical leaders denouncing an endangered Christianity. They are frequently to be heard in the fourth and fifth centuries, for instance in the introductory lecture to the *Prebaptismal Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem (*c.* 348), or in the letter sent to Theophilus of Alexandria by a Jerusalem synod held in 400, on the occasion of the traditional festival for the Dedication of the Holy Sepulchre (13

[14] Besides the biblical territories of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, Byzantine Palestine comprises several trans-Jordanian cities, the southern part of the former Roman province of Arabia, the Negev from Elusa to Aila, and the largest part of the Sinai peninsula. See Tsafrir and others, *Tabula Imperii Romani*, p. 17, fig. 4.

[15] As stated by J. Geiger, 'Aspects of Palestinian Paganism in Late Antiquity', in *Sharing the Sacred* (see note 4, above), pp. 3–17, 'the complexity of the religious situation in this country will find few equals' (pp. 5–6). For a symptomatic case of the fate of Jewish Christianity, see B. Pixner, 'Nazoreans on Mount Zion (Jerusalem)', in *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états*, ed. by S. C. Mimouni and F. Stanley-Jones (Paris, 2001), pp. 289–316. On the role played by Samaritans in civic life, cf. Di Segni, 'Involvement', pp. 329–30.

[16] According to C. Dauphin, 'De l'Église de la circoncision à l'Église de la gentilité: Sur une nouvelle voie hors de l'impasse', *LA*, 43 (1993), 223–42 (pp. 240–42), the process by which the Judaeo-Christians of Galilee disappeared came to an end in the fifth century.

September).[17] Yet even later concerns for such 'enemies' of Christianity do not totally disappear, as is shown by the petition of the monks led by Sabas and Theodosius to Emperor Anastasius in 518.[18] Revolting Samaritans also continued to represent a concrete threat for the Church in the glorious days of Justinian's reign. In this same period Christians had to cope with problems arising from their daily interaction with people of a different religious allegiance, like Jews or pagans, as we hear from the correspondence of the two Gazan recluses Barsanuphius and John.[19]

It would be too simplistic to think that we are dealing here just with more or less residual phenomena of survival. This may perhaps apply to paganism, especially concentrated in the coastal plain between Caesarea and Gaza or among the nomadic tribes of southern Palestine, which shall increasingly be won over to Christianity (though even in this case the process of the disappearance of paganism must have demanded more time than we normally suppose).[20] But the same does not hold true for the Jewish and the Samaritan communities, the first one having its main settlement in eastern Galilee and the Golan heights, though also scattered in the area around Eleutheropolis, while the second spread itself outside its traditional region of central Palestine in the direction of both provincial capitals Caesarea and Scythopolis.[21] Contrary to the pagans, both religious groups proved to be rather refractory to the efforts of Christianization.

[17] See respectively Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procat.* 10 and Jerome, *Ep.* 93, ed. by I. Hilberg, CSEL, 55 (Vienna, 1996), p. 155, ll. 9–19. Both texts associate Jews, Samaritans, and pagans as enemies of the Church even more dangerous than the heretics. On Cyril's text see the careful analysis of O. Irshai, 'Cyril of Jerusalem: The Apparition of the Cross and the Jews', in *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christian and Jews*, ed. by O. Limor and G. G. Stroumsa (Tübingen, 1996), pp. 85–104 (p. 99). As for the Jerusalem synod, Z. Rubin, 'The Cult of the Holy Places and Christian Politics in Byzantine Jerusalem', in *Jerusalem — Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism* (see note 2, above), pp. 151–62 (p. 156 and n. 33), suggests a dating to 401.

[18] Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Sab.* 57.

[19] Cf. Letters 752, 775–777 and my remarks in 'Monasticism as a Factor of Religious Interaction in the Holy Land during the Byzantine Period', in *Sharing the Sacred* (see note 4, above), pp. 67–95, (pp. 91–93).

[20] Cf. Geiger, 'Aspects of Palestinian Paganism', p. 16: 'the hold of paganism on the inhabitants of Palestine in late antiquity must have been even stronger than implied by our partial, and partisan, evidence'.

[21] For a lively picture of the Jewish community in Galilee, see *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. by L. I. Levine (New York, 1992); Stemberger, 'Jewish-Christian Contacts', pp. 133–34.

Archaeological evidence significantly supports the impression of a religiously non-homogeneous landscape and at the same time reveals the steadfast process of Christianization, as we can guess from a comparative analysis of religious architecture during the Byzantine period. While some of the synagogue buildings should be ascribed to the period preceding the fourth century, the remains of churches almost exclusively go back to the Byzantine era, thus witnessing to a flourishing of ecclesiastical architecture that would continue for a while even after the Arab conquest.[22] In any event, during our period synagogue buildings are attested in a number of sites sensibly inferior to that of the church buildings, these reaching almost three times their number. In addition, it should be noted that evidence for synagogues is for the most part restricted to rural areas, whereas church buildings characterize the urban scene.[23]

The Transformation of Palestine into the 'Holy Land' of Christians

Against this political and religious background, the first aspect of Byzantine Christianity that deserves to be mentioned is the gradual transformation of Palestine into the 'Holy Land' of Christians. Essentially, it is an effect brought about by the epochal change in the religious policy of the empire with the support assured by Constantine to the Church. We cannot of course deny the existence of some Christian holy places in the pre-Constantinian era, as shown for instance by the tradition about the Cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem.[24] But the official recognition and implementation of Palestine as the Christian 'Holy Land' developed only after 324, when Constantine extended his power to the

[22] Cf. L. Di Segni, 'Epigraphic Documentation on Building in the Provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*, 4th–7th c.', in *Roman and Byzantine Near East* (see note 12, above), II, 149–78.

[23] I rely on the statistics established by Y. Tsafrir in *Tabula Imperii Romani*, pp. 8–19; see especially p. 19: 'A comparison of the map of Jewish centers and synagogues with that of the churches and episcopal cities shows that, in general, the Christians gained a solid majority. The remains of churches, often more than one, have been discovered at 335 sites (altogether some 390 churches), to which we may add 25 episcopal cities and churches known from sources. Remains of synagogues were found in 118 sites, of which 10 are Samaritan [...]. However, most of the settlements were rural; in most of the cities, even where Jewish synagogues were found, the Jews were only a small minority'.

[24] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 78; Origen, *C. Cels.* 1.51; O. Keel and M. Küchler, *Orte und Landschaften der Bibel*, 2 vols (Zurich, 1982–84), II, 621–26.

eastern half of the empire.[25] Such recognition is the result of an effort combining the initiative of the emperor with the ambition of the bishop of Jerusalem. There is no way of exactly defining the part respectively played by the political and the ecclesiastical authorities at the beginning. In any case, Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem, is not a secondary figure in the whole story. At the Council of Nicaea (325), the first 'ecumenical' meeting of bishops assembled by the emperor himself, Macarius succeeded in vindicating the prestige of his see as the Mother Church of Christianity against the rights of the metropolitan bishop of Caesarea, the famous Eusebius, at the time suspect for his Arian penchant.[26] After that, with the support of Constantine and the assistance of his mother, Empress Helena, who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 326, Macarius initiated the construction of the Christian Jerusalem. First he discovered the presumed tomb of Christ under the ruins of the Aphrodite Temple built by the Romans and then erected on them the complex of the Anastasis, which would be completed under his successor Maximus. If this building was from now called upon to function as the focal point of Christian Jerusalem, thus superseding the previous location on Mount Zion as the centre of the community, other churches were soon to be elevated, under the sponsorship of the emperor, in Bethlehem, on the Mount of Olives, and in Mambre.[27]

Constantine's building projects, as openly stated in a letter to Macarius, reflect the precise design of celebrating the cradle of Christianity in some of its most symbolic sites, connected as they were with central points of its religious message. The imperial interventions opened up the path to similar initiatives throughout Palestine.[28] We cannot therefore underrate the impact of church

[25] See E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312–460* (Oxford, 1982); J. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford, 1993) is too critical about the pre-Constantinian traditions. I have dealt with this major shift in '"The Mystery of Judaea" (Jerome, *Ep.* 46): The Holy City of Jerusalem between History and Symbol in Early Christian Thought', in *Jerusalem — Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism* (see note 2, above), pp. 221–39.

[26] Can. 7 concedes to the bishop of Jerusalem a primacy of honor over the metropolitan see of Caesarea, probably on the occasion of synods that would take place outside Palestine. Concerning Eusebius at Nicaea, see below, pp. 162–63.

[27] Eusebius, *V. Const.* 3.25–40; 3. 41–43; 3.51–53. For the (Jewish-)Christian presence on Mount Zion, see R. Riesner, 'Der christliche Zion: vor- oder nachkonstantinisch?' in *Early Christianity in Context: Monuments and Documents*, ed. by F. Manns and E. Alliata (Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 85–90; and Pixner.

[28] See *Ancient Churches Revealed*, ed. by Y. Tsafrir (Jerusalem, 1993), especially the editor's

construction on the Christianization of the country, first and foremost in places like Jerusalem or Bethlehem where paganism had won a foothold after 135, or later on in Gaza, a city firmly in the hands of paganism until the beginning of the fifth century.[29] The missionary intention eloquently comes to the fore in Constantine's injunction to the Palestinian bishops inviting them to erect a basilica in Mambre, the site near Hebron in which the angels appeared to Abraham, in order to prevent the syncretistic cult taking place there and also involving Christians together with Jews and pagans.[30] A similar goal underlies the constructions promoted during Constantine's reign by the *comes* Joseph of Tiberias, a Jewish convert, who built churches in Tiberias, Sepphoris, Nazareth, and Capernaum — that is, in a region where Jewish presence was still prevailing,[31] not to mention the Theotokos church erected in the late fifth century (484) by Emperor Zeno on Mount Gerizim as a sort of missionary challenge to the Samaritans.[32]

Since the first decades of the fourth century, church buildings commemorating the places where Jesus had lived and the Christian community was originally established attracted a growing flow of pilgrims from all over the world. The pilgrims arriving from so many foreign countries contributed to create the international visage of Palestinian Christianity, one of its most typical features during the Byzantine era and a lasting heritage for the following centuries. They not only helped to widen the horizon of this church beyond its own regional sphere, but many of them, after performing the pilgrimage, decided to remain and to settle in the country. Consequently, pilgrimage was a second fundamental

introductory article: 'The Development of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Palestine', pp. 1–16.

[29] Tsafrir, 'Byzantine Jerusalem', p. 136, sees the construction of the Anastasis as marking the triumph of Christianity over paganism.

[30] Eusebius, *V. Const.* 3.52–53; cf. G. Kretschmar, 'Mambre: Von der "Basilika" zum "Martyrium"', in *Mélanges liturgiques offerts au R. P. Dom Bernard Botte* (Leuven, 1972), pp. 273–93; A. Kofsky, 'Mamre: A Case of a Regional Cult?' in *Sharing the Sacred* (see note 4, above), pp. 19–30.

[31] Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.4–12; F. Manns, 'Joseph de Tibériade, un judéo-chrétien du quatrième siècle', in *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land: New Discoveries*, ed. by G. C. Bottini, L. Di Segni, and E. Alliata (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 553–59.

[32] V. Corbo, 'The Church of the House of St. Peter at Capernaum', in *Ancient Churches Revealed* (see note 28, above), pp. 71–76 (p. 73); E. M. Meyers, 'Roman Sepphoris in Light of New Archaeological Evidence', in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. by L. I. Levine (New York, 1992), pp. 321–38 (p. 328); Y. Magen, 'The Church of Mary Theotokos on Mt. Gerizim', in *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land* (see note 31, above), pp. 333–41.

factor for the Christianization of Palestine. Such an effect can also be shown by considering how the circuit of *loca sancta* evolved in the course of the Byzantine period: the network of holy places, based mainly at the beginning on a Jewish circuit of Old Testament sites, quite soon gained a Christian imprint. While the anonymous Pilgrim of Bordeaux, who visited Palestine in 333, still reflects the Jewish-biblical perspective of the Holy Land, Egeria, a 'nun' of Spanish origin travelling around 381–84, draws in her *Itinerary* the picture of a religious landscape standing under the sign of Christianity.[33]

The Christian annexation of the territory through the circuit of *loca sancta* and pilgrimage is implemented by the rites that pilgrims are invited to perform during their visit there. The most symptomatic case is of course Jerusalem, thanks to its rich ensemble of churches related to the events of the Passion, Death, and the Resurrection of Christ as well as to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the first community. A historicizing approach to liturgical celebrations, which probably took shape around the middle of the fourth century with subsequent additions well into the first half of the fifth, finally consecrated Jerusalem as a Christian 'Holy City'.[34] Space and time are now perceived in the light of the history of salvation in Christ, its chief episodes being regularly re-enacted in the annual festivities celebrated on the spot itself where according to tradition these events had taken place.

Loca sancta and pilgrimage, besides influencing the development of the Jerusalem liturgy, also stimulated the invention of relics in order to corroborate the asserted identification of the holy place. The best-known test case is the discovery of the Holy Cross, the most precious trophy of Christian Jerusalem, possibly found during the excavations of the tomb of Christ and soon called upon to play an exceptional role in the liturgical celebrations of Jerusalem and to exert a unique appeal on the whole Christian world.[35] In the words of Cyril

[33] See Wilken, *The Land Called Holy*, p. 110; G. Bowman, 'Mapping History's Redemption: Eschatology and Topography in the Itinerarium Burdigalense', in *Jerusalem — Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism* (see note 2, above), pp. 163–87. P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient: Histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe* (Paris, 1985), pp. 63–66, stresses the rapidity of the growing inventory. See also the article by O. Limor in this volume.

[34] For G. Kretschmar, 'Festkalender und Memorialstätten Jerusalems in altkirchlicher Zeit', *ZDPV*, 87 (1971), 167–205 (p. 178), the development of the stational liturgy in Jerusalem was influenced by the practice of pilgrims.

[35] For Z. Rubin, 'The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Conflict between the Sees of Caesarea and Jerusalem', *The Jerusalem Cathedra*, 2 (1982), 79–105 (pp. 82–85), there is a hint

of Jerusalem, the initiator of the cult of the Cross, this relic should be regarded as an indisputable witness to the truth of Christianity.[36] Invention of relics is thus a means not only of consolidating and enlarging the circuit of the holy places but also of stressing the Christianization of the country under another aspect. A missionary finality can also be perceived in episodes taking place toward the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries, such as the discovery of the relics of the prophets Habbakuk, Micah, and Zechariah, but is most evident in the finding of the supposed remains of St Stephen (415). While the vindication of the prophets' relics betray the Christian appropriation of the Jewish heritage,[37] the finding of those of the first martyr of Christ contributes to strengthening the rights of Christianity over the Holy Land against Judaism — witness to that Hesychius of Jerusalem, the most brilliant preacher of the Holy City in the first half of the fifth century.[38]

We have so far brought to light some of the principal factors that structurally promoted and accompanied the configuration of Byzantine Palestine as a Christian 'Holy Land'. But to adequately describe the Christianization of the country effected by this transformation we have to take into account the important part played in this phenomenon by monasticism. The few instances of missionary activity we hear of in this period have to do, directly or indirectly, with monks, though we should not emphasize their professional vocation as missionaries.[39] As a matter of fact, through their remarkable existence they stood in the forefront as witnesses of Christianity, even when living in the midst of a desert. We may observe this, in the first half of the fourth century, with Hilarion, a monk who was a native of Thabatha near Gaza, practising an anchoritic lifestyle and facing the challenge of a paganism that was particularly

of the discovery of the Cross in Constantine's letter to Macarius (Eusebius, *V. Const.* 3.30.1). On this *vexata quaestio*, see lately S. Heid, 'Die gute Absicht im Schweigen Eusebs über die Kreuzauffindung', *RQ*, 96 (2001), 37–56.

[36] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 13.4.

[37] For L. Di Segni and J. Patrich, 'The Greek Inscriptions in the Cave Chapel of Horvath Qasra', *'Atiqot*, 10 (1990), 141–154 (Hebrew; Eng. summary, pp. 31*–33*), these discoveries 'marked the process of appropriation by Christians of sites formerly linked to Jewish traditions' (p. 33*).

[38] Cf. P. Devos, 'Le panégyrique de St. Étienne par Hésychius de Jérusalem', *AB*, 86 (1968), 151–72; M. Aubineau, *Les homélies festales d'Hésychius de Jérusalem*, 2 vols (Bruxelles, 1978), I, 289–350 (*Hom.* 9, *In S. Steph.*).

[39] In my contribution, 'Monasticism as a Factor', p. 73, I speak of a 'contained missionary "aggressiveness"' by comparison with Egyptian and Syriac monasticism.

strong in that area.[40] His status as a 'holy man' in the eyes both of Christians and pagans led him to perform miracles on people of the two communities and to win sympathy for his faith among the pagans. But, despite the conversions in the family of the Church historian Sozomen, the success of this unofficial 'apostolic role', as far as we know, was less considerable within the Greek-speaking inhabitants of Gaza than with the Semitic population of the Negev. On the occasion of a festival of Venus in Elusa, Hilarion — thanks to his miraculous powers — is said by his biographer Jerome to have gained adherents to the Christian faith among the Saracens and to have transformed a pagan temple into a church.[41]

In the following century we can better grasp the historical dimensions of another episode taking place this time in the Judaean Desert: the conversion of an Arab tribe after the healing by Euthymius of Terebon, son of Aspebet, the tribe's chieftain (*c.* 422).[42] The story has a political implication, since two years earlier the Saracens, previously charged with the control of the frontier on behalf of the Persians, had gone over to the Byzantines. Yet Euthymius, an anchorite who laid the ground for the tradition of Sabaite monasticism, profited from his appeal as a holy man by assuring catechetical instruction and baptism for the tribesfolk. In addition to that, he obtained from the bishop of Jerusalem, Juvenal, the creation of a special bishopric for the nomads after they had settled in the 'Camp of the Tents' near Euthymius's monastery, a laura built with the help of the Saracens. Significantly Aspebet now joins the civil and the ecclesiastical authority by becoming the first bishop of the *Parembolai* ('the tents') under the name of Peter.[43] Such an epilogue makes the story quite unique in the Byzantine period. Yet some form of missionary activity must have been

[40] B. Bitton-Ashkelony and A. Kofsky, 'Gazan Monasticism in the Fourth-Sixth Centuries: From Anchoritic to Cenobitic', *POC*, 50 (2000), 14–62 (pp. 17–25).

[41] Jerome, *V. Hil.* 9.11, 16; Sozomen, *HE* 5.15.

[42] Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Euth.* 10. A further precedent is the conversion, during the reign of Valens (364–87), of the Saracen queen Mavia with the help of Moses, a Sinai anchorite (Rufinus of Aquileia, *HE* 11.6; Sozomen *HE* 6.38). Cf. R. Solzbacher, *Mönche, Pilger und Sarazenen: Studien zum Frühchristentum auf der südlichen Sinaihalbinsel von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn islamischer Herrschaft* (Altenberge, 1989), p. 84.

[43] Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Euth.* 15. Y. Hirschfeld, 'Euthymius and His Monastery in the Judean Desert', *LA*, 43 (1993), 339–71.

practised by monks, at least if we reckon with the fact that many monastic foundations disposed of a baptistery.[44]

Later on we shall observe further aspects of the impact exerted by monasticism on Byzantine Palestine. In the present context we should still remember how monks have essentially supported the practice of pilgrimage, inasmuch as frequently enough they had been themselves pilgrims before settling in the country as ascetics. The company surrounding Egeria during her tour of the Holy Land is almost always made up of monks who assist the pilgrims, providing them with information and hospitality, and performing together with them the usual rites on the spot.[45] As guardians of the holy places, monks are acquainted with local traditions and itineraries. In some instances they contribute themselves to the establishment of the circuit of the holy places that pilgrims are called upon to visit or eventually to avoid, as happens in the days of the doctrinal conflicts after the Council of Chalcedon (451).[46]

Contrary to the aggressiveness shown by Egyptian and Syriac monks against pagans, Jews, and other religious groups in the fourth and fifth centuries, the monks of Palestine normally did not attack the members of these communities or destroy their buildings. The only important episode we can record in the early Byzantine period (438) — the riots against Jews who were going to the Temple site — is an initiative of Barsauma of Nisibis and his troop of fanatic monks coming from Syria.[47] Generally speaking, despite sporadic outbursts of violence in particular situations — for instance, the short reign of Emperor Julian

[44] See M. Ben-Pechat, 'Baptism and Monasticism in the Holy Land: Archaeological and Literary Evidence', in *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land* (see note 31, above), pp. 501–22, who on the other hand remarks that baptismal installations are mostly later than the original foundations.

[45] Cf. a paradigmatic case from the start in Egeria's description of her visit to Sinai (*Itin.* 1–5).

[46] For H. S. Sivan, 'Pilgrims, Monasticism and the Emergence of ChristianPalestine in the 4th Century', in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. by R. Ousterhout (Urbana, 1990), pp. 54–65, monks, while defining the itineraries of pilgrimage, seem to have made a selection among different indications offered by Jewish — and for the Sinai, even pagan — sources. On monophysite monks occasionally suggesting the avoidance of holy places see L. Perrone, 'Christian Holy Places and Pilgrimage in an Age of Dogmatic Conflicts', *POC*, 48 (1998), 5–37.

[47] For the dating see F.-M. Abel, *Histoire de la Palestine depuis la conquête d'Alexandre jusqu'à l'invasion arabe* (Paris, 1952), pp. 334–35, while G. Stemberger, *Juden und Christen im Heiligen Land: Palästina unter Konstantin und Theodosius* (Munich, 1987), pp. 249–50, questions the traditional chronology .

(361–63), the Samaritan revolts between the fifth and sixth centuries, or the Persian invasion at the beginning of the seventh — the Christianization of Palestine, with the only notable exception of Gaza, had substantially no recourse to coercive means.[48] Concerning the city of Gaza, where a scanty Christian community must have already existed before the Council of Nicaea, the campaign of Bishop Porphyrius (395–420) against the Temple of Marnas finally succeeded thanks to the support of the imperial power, while monasticism played no considerable part in the events.[49] To explain the different behaviour of Palestinian monks, one should consider the condition of Christians as a minority group until the fifth century or, at least, even when the apogee of Christianization reached its peak, the persistent insertion into a multireligious society. Archaeological evidence too seems nowadays to confirm these impressions, as far as it concerns a region like Galilee, inhabited by Jews and Christians at the same time. Far from supporting the idea that Christians destroyed the synagogues there, the picture emerging from recent studies rather implies terms of more or less peaceful coexistence between the Christian and the Jewish community.[50]

The 'Mother of All Churches': The Creation of a New Patriarchate

A major reflection of the transformation of Palestine into the 'Holy Land' of Christians is the creation of a new patriarchate toward the middle of the fifth century. The successful vindication of patriarchal rights for the see of Jerusalem put forth by Bishop Juvenal (422–58) crowned the emergence of Christian Palestine and its special status within the Byzantine Church. Until that moment Palestine, as an ecclesiastical province, had been part of the patriarchate of Antioch. In reality, even before our period the Palestinian Church, led by the sees of Caesarea and Jerusalem, had evinced signs of independence and had displayed a certain spirit of initiative vis-à-vis the neighbouring churches, particularly in the province of Arabia. Yet the driving force that would finally

[48] Contra Z. Rubin, 'Christianity in Byzantine Palestine: Missionary Activity and Religious Coercion', *The Jerusalem Cathedra*, 3 (1983), 97–113 (p. 107).

[49] See my analysis in 'Monasticism as a Factor', pp. 76–77.

[50] Cf. G. Stemberger, 'Jewish-Christian Contacts', pp. 138–43.; R. C. Gregg, 'Making Religious and Ethnic Boundaries: Cases from the Ancient Golan Heights', *CH*, 69 (2000), 519–57. For a new analysis see D. Bar, 'The Christianization of Rural Palestine during Late Antiquity', *JEH*, 54 (2003), 401–21.

succeed in establishing the patriarchate could only come from the implementation of Jerusalem as the Christian 'Holy City' par excellence. In the hierarchical order, usually conforming to the political one, Jerusalem was originally subject to the metropolitan see of Caesarea, which in its turn was later on to be joined by the two other *metropoleis* of Scythopolis and Petra. On the other hand, there were further changes in the ecclesiastical geography of Palestine that are of interest for us. We can follow to some extent the development of the Church organization from the beginning of the fourth century onward through the episcopal lists recording the participation of bishops in synods held in Palestine or abroad. Facing these lists we are immediately impressed by the multiplication of the episcopal sees during the later Byzantine period.[51] This is a fact that undoubtedly points to the steadfast Christianization of the territory, although the presence of a bishop may sometimes be connected with a modest community, as was the case of Gaza up to Porphyrius's time.[52]

At the Council of Nicaea (325), with a political arrangement of Palestine different from that established after 400 comprising much larger borders, we already have evidence of about twenty episcopal sees. To the extent that we can rely on our sources, the distribution of the dioceses throughout the territory is quite irregular, since they are concentrated for the most part in the central region around Jerusalem or along the Mediterranean coast going from Caesarea to Gaza.[53] Though some bishops may have not been able to participate in the council of 325, the picture we can draw from the list — bearing in mind the future situation — seems to be rather plausible.

There is, for instance, only one bishopric in Galilee, at Chabulon, a village east of Ptolemais, while this see together with Paneas (Caesarea Philippi) in the northern Golan, both attested among the participants in the council, is attached to Syria Phoenicia. In the following period the ecclesiastical organization of Galilee does not appreciably change: Chabulon disappears, probably absorbed

[51] See F.-M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine*, 2 vols (Paris, 1933–38), II, 200–02; A. Alt, 'Die Bistümer der Kirche Palästinas', *PJB*, 29 (1933), 67–88.

[52] Rubin, 'Christianity in Byzantine Palestine', p. 98.

[53] Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine*, p. 198, lists the following sees: Caesarea, Jerusalem, Neapolis, Sebaste (Samaria) and its territory, Maximianopolis (Legio), Zabulon (Chabulon), Iamnia, Azotos, Ascalon, Gaza, Lydda (Diospolis), Nicopolis (Emmaus), Eleutheropolis, Hiericho, Scythopolis, Gadara, Capitolias, Aila. Other sees, not attested by the Nicaea list, may be reasonably presumed as already existent at the time such as Ioppe, Apollonia, Antipatris, Dora (ibid., pp. 198–99). For the toponomastics I rely on Tsafrir and others, *Tabula Imperii Romani*, with its map of the churches in the Byzantine period.

or substituted by the diocese of Sepphoris (Diocaesarea), whereas we have notice of only three more sees: Tiberias, Exaloth, and Helenoupolis.[54] Significantly enough, no episcopal see is attested for Nazareth, a Jewish village well into the sixth century, or for the other places of Jesus's public activity in Galilee, an additional confirmation of the fact that the region was still inhabited mainly by Jews. But the picture is rather different east and south of the Sea of Galilee, in the former Hellenized area of the Decapolis, where we find the dioceses of Gadara, Capitolias, and Scythopolis, the Nicaea list including also Maximianopolis on the western border of the Jezreel Valley.[55] All these sees will afterward be subordinated to the metropolitan of Scythopolis, within the provincial district of Palaestina Secunda, with the addition of bishoprics in Gabae (on the western fringe of the Jezreel Valley) and in three further cities of former Decapolis: Hippos, Pella, and Abila.[56]

By comparison with the list of Nicaea, no relevant changes subsequently affected the ecclesiastical organization of Samaria and Judaea. The two episcopal sees of Neapolis and Sebaste are the only ones attested for Samaria during the whole Byzantine period, certainly an indicator of the fact that this territory alike remained refractory to the spreading of Christianity, though we should also take into account the fact that in Samaria, and partially in Judaea, the rural milieu prevailed on urban society, while bishoprics were normally located in towns. Then, as far as Judaea is concerned, besides Jerusalem, Eleutheropolis, and Hiericho, whose bishops are recorded by the list of Nicaea, we have still to add the sees of Nicopolis and the Parembole, the special diocese for the Saracens converted by Euthymius.

The most significant transformation in the ecclesiastical structures took place in the region of the Pedias, the plain along the Mediterranean shore running north–south from Phoenicia to Egypt. Already in Nicaea we can list quite many dioceses located on the coast or in its proximity such as the metropolitan see of Caesarea and the suffragan bishops of Iamnia, Azotos, Ascalon, Gaza, and Lydda. In the following period, practically all the towns located on the coastal

[54] Sepphoris, Exaloth, and Helenoupolis are listed as episcopal sees only in the sixth century; cf. Tsafrir and others, *Tabula Imperii Romani*, pp. 227, 124, 142, respectively.

[55] On the sees of Gadara and Capitolias, cf. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine,* pp. 294–95, 323; on Scythopolis, ibid., p. 223.

[56] On Hippos see ibid., pp. 471–72; Tsafrir and others, *Tabula Imperii Romani*, p. 147; on Pella and Abila, see M. Piccirillo, *Chiese e mosaici della Giordania settentrionale* (Jerusalem, 1981).

line of Palestine would have their own episcopal see. The bishops' lists therefore include the names of Dora, Apollonia, Antipatris, Ioppe, Iamnia Paralios (the harbor of Iamnia), Saraphia, Anthedon, Maiuma of Gaza, Sycomazon, Menois, Raphia, Bitulion, and Gerara. Faced with the dissemination of the bishoprics in this area, as witnessed by the later Byzantine period, we should observe how the phenomenon was particularly intense in the area around Gaza.[57] All the bishoprics mentioned so far, together with those of the Judaean region, are part of the province Palaestina Prima, which after 400 also included a transjordanian territory, previously incorporated into the province of Arabia. This territory, pertaining to Perea in biblical times, now comprised the four dioceses of Gadora, Amathous, Livias, and Bacatha.[58]

Finally the list of Nicaea mentions only a bishopric for the Negev: the see of Aila at the head of the Aelamitic Gulf in the Red Sea. In this region too the following centuries saw a considerable increase of the diocesan structures due to the large extension of Palaestina Tertia. This province now embraced almost the whole territory of Sinai and the southern part of Arabia. While the Negev now counted one more episcopal see located in Elusa and Sinai had two, respectively in Iotabe, on the eastern coast not far from Aila, and in the oasis of Pharan, in southern Sinai, a tight web of bishoprics surrounded the region southeast of the Dead Sea: Charach Mouba, Areopolis (Rabbat Mouba), Zoara, Petra, Augustopolis, Arindela, and Phaino, most of them being attested from the middle of the fifth century, and all submitted to Petra as their metropolitan see.[59]

From a statistical point of view, we can measure the growth of the ecclesiastical organization in the three centuries after Nicaea by examining the number of the participants in two synods which were held in Jerusalem in 518

[57] Dora, Apollonia, Antipatris, Ioppe, Anthedon, Sycomazon, Menois, Raphia, and Gerara are all attested as episcopal sees in the fifth and sixth centuries; Iamnia Paralios, Saraphia, and Bitulion in the sixth; while Maiumas of Gaza is 'an episcopal see in its own right in the fourth–sixth centuries', Tsafrir and others, *Tabula Imperii Romani*, p. 175. See now also L. Di Segni, 'The Territory of Gaza: Notes of Historical Geography', in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, ed. by B. Bitton-Ashkelony and A. Kofsky (Leiden, 2004), pp. 41–59.

[58] On these four dioceses see Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine*, pp. 324, 242–43, 159, 201, n. 5, respectively.

[59] Cf. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine*, pp. 418–19, 425, 466, 407–08, 168, 201, respectively. For the development of the ecclesiastical organization in the Negev and Sinai see Solzbacher, pp. 167–99, and U. Dahari, *Monastic Settlements in South Sinai in the Byzantine Period: The Archaeological Remains* (Jerusalem, 2000). The statistics of Alt, 'Die Bistümer', indicate fifty bishoprics.

and 536: thirty-four bishops were present in the first, while in the second there were forty-seven, possibly almost the total sum of the bishoprics existing at that time in Palestine.[60] Even if the attempts of Bishop Juvenal to transfer the two provinces of Phoenicia and Arabia from the patriarchate of Antioch to that of Jerusalem, on the eve of the Council of Chalcedon, did not succeed in the last resort, the network of dioceses was more than twice that of Nicaea.[61]

This complex of dioceses necessarily implied forms of synodal life even at local level, such as those attested by the two large synods which assembled in Jerusalem at the beginning of the sixth century. We unfortunately possess evidence only for a limited number of cases, but we can reasonably presume that the local synods were more frequent. There was indeed a unique opportunity for such meetings: the annual celebration of the Encaenia, the dedication of the Holy Sepulchre (13 September), when numerous bishops convened in Jerusalem with a mass of pilgrims. This rendezvous, attested for instance by the synod of 400 mentioned above,[62] probably became rather usual after the bishop of the Holy City gained the status of patriarch, thus controlling the ecclesiastical affairs of the three provinces. Outside Jerusalem we are informed about the important Synod of Diospolis (415), which assembled to debate the doctrinal challenge of Pelagianism, imported into the Palestinian Church from abroad. Later on we hear of a synod in Gaza, before the middle of the sixth century (539–40), though in this case we have to do with a kind of international meeting rather than with a local synod.[63]

To dispose of more evidence for the synodal practice would help us to better identify the distinctive profile of the Palestinian episcopate during the Byzantine period. Apart from a few leading figures, first and foremost the patriarchs of Jerusalem, we are not able to trace its image from the intellectual or sociological point of view, though we possess some interesting clues to its collective

[60] See respectively, *ACO*, III, 79–90 and 188–89, and my remarks in *La chiesa di Palestina e le controversie cristologiche: Dal concilio di Efeso (431) al secondo concilio di Costantinopoli (553)* (Brescia, 1980), pp. 177, 200–02.

[61] The provinces of Phenicia and Arabia were incorporated into the patriarchate of Jerusalem shortly after the conclusion of the Second Synod of Ephesus (449), but Juvenal was formally obliged to restitute them two years later in an agreement with the patriarch of Antioch. Cf. E. Honigmann, 'Juvenal of Jerusalem', *DOP*, 5 (1950), 209–79 (p. 238).

[62] Cf. note 17, above.

[63] Perrone, *La chiesa di Palestina* , pp. 206–07.

appearance in the councils of the fifth century.[64] At least concerning the recruitment of bishops, one thing is quite clear: as soon as monasticism became an important factor in the religious life of Palestine, i.e., from the end of the fourth century onward, the personnel for the episcopal hierarchy was increasingly taken from within the ranks of the monks. For the fifth century alone we have indications that the greatest number of the Jerusalem patriarchs had formerly been monks.[65] On the other hand, the transition from monk to bishop should not be regarded as immediate and automatic. Contrary to that, our sources indirectly stress the opportunity of becoming previously accustomed to the clerical status, for instance by serving first in the lower hierarchical degrees and so fulfilling a more or less fixed *cursus honorum*.

This happened quite naturally for the many monks coming from the monasteries of the Judaean Desert who joined the Jerusalem clergy before becoming patriarchs there or bishops elsewhere. Let us mention just one example taken from the little group of the first disciples of Euthymius: Cosmas, after assuming the task of a *staurophylax*, the guardian of the Cross, was appointed bishop of Scythopolis.[66] Besides the particularly honorific charge of *staurophylax*, the hierarchical body of the Jerusalem Church deserves attention for other aspects. Due to the importance of the liturgical practice in the Holy City (necessitating, among other things, the existence of interpreters for Syriac and Latin, as witnessed by Egeria),[67] there is, at least for a while, a special office of 'teacher' (*didaskalos*), consisting in catechetical instruction and preaching during the liturgical celebrations. Hesychius, who died shortly after the Council of Chalcedon, held this office for several decades.[68] Another important charge is that of *chorepiskopos*, a kind of 'auxiliary bishop' to the patriarch, as such responsible for the territory around Jerusalem. Since the city and its environs were populated by monastic foundations, initially the office of *chorepiskopos* also involved a specific responsibility for them under the title of 'archimandrite' (or *exarchos*) of the monks. Its first holder, Passarion (d. *c.* 428/29), a protagonist of

[64] See hereto my article 'I vescovi palestinesi ai concili cristologici della prima metà del V secolo', *AHC*, 10 (1978), 16–52.

[65] As far as we know, this is the case of John (387–417), Juvenal (422–58), Anastasius (458–78), Martyrius (478–86), Elias (494–516). I have sketched their ecclesiastical career in my *La chiesa di Palestina*.

[66] Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Euth.* 16.20, 37.

[67] *Itin.* 47.

[68] Cf. Aubineau, *Les homélies festales* (see note 38, above).

hagiopolite monasticism at the beginning of the fifth century, united the two offices in his person.[69] Subsequently we lose track of the *chorepiskopos* in Jerusalem (though we have evidence of it in other local situations), and the archimandrite of the monks apparently becomes a representative body elected by the monks themselves. Moreover the office underwent a division of the tasks with regard to eremitical monasticism (*laurae* and anchorites) on the one hand, and the coenobitic life on the other. In this role Sabas and Theodosius, as archimandrites respectively of the *laurae* and the *koinobia*, will assume a decisive role in the struggle pro and con the Council of Chalcedon at the beginning of the sixth century.

The articulation of the ecclesiastical structures in the Church of Palestine is of course more complex than the few offices we have just mentioned. We can catch a glimpse of this if we take into account the epigraphic evidence for this period. Many inscriptions introduce us to personnel of ecclesiastical or paraecclesiastical status such as bishops, *chorepiskopoi* (or *periodeutai*), presbyters, archdeacons, deacons and deaconesses, subdeacons, *oikonomoi* or administrators, and *paramonarii* or sacristans, who left traces of their lively involvement on behalf of church buildings and the ornamental mosaics decorating them.[70] While recording this diverse personnel, inscriptions also provide us with some hints at the social impact of the higher and lower clergy on Byzantine Palestine. As a matter of fact, such activity was not restricted to church building alone but comprised a variety of interventions both in the ecclesiastical and the civil spheres. Regarding the former, the promotion of pilgrimage to the Holy Land necessitated the creation of an infrastructure of hostels for pilgrims in and around Jerusalem.[71] Such 'hostels for foreigners' (*xenodochia*) particularly responded to the needs of the poor, so that in some cases they seem to have assured a permanent service as specialized 'hospices for the poor' (*ptocheia*). We also hear of the existence of hospices for the aged (*gerokomeia*) and for the ill (*nosokomeia*), though in most cases these functions were probably assumed by

[69] Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Euth.* 16; Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 287–92.

[70] See I. Meimaris, *Sacred Names, Saints, Martyrs and Church Officials in the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Pertaining to the Christian Church of Palestine* (Athens, 1986); Di Segni, 'Epigraphic Documentation'. L. Di Segni, 'Christian Epigraphy in the Holy Land: New Discoveries', *ARAM Periodical*, 23 (2004), 131–58. Archaeological materials are particularly rich in the trans-Jordanian region; for interesting examples, cf. Piccirillo, *Chiese e mosaici*; Piccirillo, *Madaba*.

[71] Useful insights in Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient*, pp. 203–12.

one and the same structure.[72] This kind of social network was set up with the help of the clergy, but also of the monastic foundations — first and foremost the coenobium of Theodosius near Bethlehem — and of well-situated laypeople like Empress Eudocia, who came to stay in Jerusalem in the first half of the fifth century.[73] Moreover, ecclesiastical initiative was also characteristic of the secular sphere, bishops being sometimes engaged in building installations of a profane nature such as baths, porticoes, or even jails, thus attesting to the deep involvement of the Church in the life of Byzantine Palestine.[74]

The Inner Life of the Church: The Involvement of the Holy Land in Dogmatic Controversies

Bearing in mind the picture of Christianity in Byzantine Palestine which we have traced so far, to speak of an 'inner life' of the Church does not imply a realm separated from the larger texture of contemporary society into which the Church was embedded. We simply refer first of all to dynamics and events related to the sphere of Christian faith and its concrete experience. Yet it goes without saying that even this domain, due precisely to the interpenetration of church and state typical of Byzantine society, could be directly or indirectly affected by factors of a different nature, political or social. Theological controversies are one of the most instructive cases for bringing to light such connections, inasmuch as from the time of Emperor Constantine dogmatic debates arising in the Church became political affairs of the imperial government.[75]

To further stress their importance we could summarize the whole span of ecclesiastical history in Byzantine Palestine as a succession of theological controversies: first, the Arian crisis, which troubled the churches of East and

[72] As observed by Di Segni, 'Epigraphic documentation', p. 153, n. 22.

[73] On Eudocia's buildings see Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Euth.* 35. As for the monastic installations, Sabas built hostelries in Jerusalem and Jericho which served both monks and laypeople; see Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 165–66.

[74] Di Segni, 'Involvement', p. 332, for instance, recalls the buildings of Marcianus the bishop of Gaza, praised by Choricius, the bathhouse renovated by Theodore of Scythopolis and assigned by him to lepers (558/559), the paving of a portico by Eutropius of Sepphoris, and the jail built in 539 by the bishop of Gerasa for arrested persons awaiting trial. See also Di Segni, 'Epigraphic Documentation', p. 157.

[75] Cf. H.-G. Beck, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend* (Munich, 1982), esp. pp. 87–108, on the concept of 'political Orthodoxy', influenced by Eusebius's imperial ideology.

West for the most part of the fourth century; then, at the turn from the fourth to the fifth centuries, on the one hand, the prelude to the Christological controversies with Apollinarianism and, on the other hand, the first Origenist crisis; later on the successive phases of the long Christological conflicts starting with Nestorianism and Monophysitism, the councils of Ephesus (431, 449) and Chalcedon (451), and finally reaching Monothelitism in the seventh century after the intermezzo of the second Origenist crisis toward the middle of the sixth century.[76]

Not every one of these controversies affected the Church of Palestine with the same intensity. We can understand this if we compare the effects of the struggle with Arianism, in the fourth century, with the consequences that were brought about in Palestine by the Christological controversies of later centuries. 'Arianism' (as far as we can maintain the validity of this overall concept) was not a theological debate imposed from outside, as would rather be the case with Pelagianism in the second decade of the fifth century. Arius's doctrine emerged as an inner crisis of the Alexandrian tradition, which during the third century had extended its influence over Palestine, particularly thanks to Origen's activity in Caesarea. Eusebius (*c.* 265–340), the great Church historian and that city's bishop when the struggle began to inflame the eastern churches, was an important representative of this tradition, though to some extent an independent one.[77] As such, Eusebius supported the theology of the Logos and consequently insisted on the recognition of a plurality of hypostases in the Trinity (first and foremost the Father and the Son, with lesser attention for the hypostasis of the Spirit) while affirming a hierarchical subordination among them.[78] Without

[76] I have dealt with some of these sequences in *La chiesa di Palestina* (see note 60, above), and more briefly in '"Four Gospels, Four Councils" — One Lord Jesus Christ: The Patristic Developments of Christology within the Church of Palestine', *LA*, 49 (1999), 357–96. See also my article: 'Theological Controversies in Byzantine Palestine: A *retractatio* and some *Prolegomena* to Future Research', *Mediterraneo Antico: Economie Società Culture*, 5 (2002), 9–23.

[77] See C. Kannengiesser, 'Eusebius of Caesarea, Origenist', in *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism*, ed. by H. W. Attridge and G. Hata (Detroit, 1992), pp. 435–66; H. Strutwolf, 'Der Origenismus des Euseb von Caesarea', in *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by W. A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg (Leuven, 1999), pp. 141–47. On Eusebius's literary activity, cf. my contribution 'Eusebius of Caesarea as a Christian Writer', in *Caesarea Maritima* (see note 13, above), pp. 515–30.

[78] Cf. H. Strutwolf, *Die Trinitätstheologie und Christologie des Euseb von Caesarea: Eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung seiner Platonismusrezeption und Wirkungsgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1999); Perrone, 'Four Gospels, Four Councils', pp. 368–72.

being himself *stricto sensu* a sympathizer of Arius, he was not at ease with the idea of the unity of God as suggested by the Nicene creed in the controversial formulation of *homoousios* (consubstantial), regarding the relation between Son and Father. In a letter to his own church Eusebius justified his subscription by asserting that the baptismal creed of Caesarea had served as the basis for the council's profession of faith.[79]

Though we should tone down the importance of the role Eusebius vindicated for himself at the Council of Nicaea, in the following period we possess enough evidence to support the claim that the bishop of Caesarea, due especially to his unique erudition, was one of the leading personalities of the Christian East. He undoubtedly contributed to the revision of Nicaea's decisions in the decade after the council (which culminated in the readmission of Arius into church communion by the Jerusalem synod of 335), among other things writing against Marcellus of Ancyra, the most prominent theologian of monarchianism. Last but not least, ten years after Nicaea Eusebius was charged with the official celebration of Constantine's thirty-year reign (335), a welcome opportunity for outlining his view of the emperor as the representative of the Logos on earth.[80] Subsequently Eusebius's celebration of Constantine found its final expression a few years later in the *Life of Constantine*, written shortly after the death of the emperor (337).

Eusebius's reaction to Arianism is probably indicative of the attitude adopted by the Palestinian episcopate of his time who, as far as we know, did not conceal some sympathy for the cause of the Alexandrian presbyter.[81] Yet Macarius of Jerusalem does not seem to have shared the same feelings. Contrary to Eusebius, who is said to have been condemned in a synod held in Antioch a year before Nicaea also attended by Palestinian bishops, he apparently presented himself at the council as 'orthodox', having approved Arius's condemnation by Alexander

[79] H.-G. Opitz, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des arianischen Streits 318–328* (Berlin, 1934–35), pp. 42–47; *Il Cristo: Testi teologici e spirituali in lingua greca dal IV al VII secolo*, ed. by M. Simonetti (Milano, 1986), pp. 102–13.

[80] H. A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley, 1976); Eusèbe de Césarée, *La théologie politique de l'empire chrétien. Louanges du Christ (Triakontaétérikos)*, Introduction, trans., and notes by P. Maraval (Paris, 2001). Contra Drake, Maraval rejects the dating of the second speech ('On the grave') to 15 September 335.

[81] On the involvement of the Palestinian episcopate in the Arian crisis, cf. R. D. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London, 1987), pp. 48–59.

of Alexandria.[82] Macarius's different attitude with regard to Arianism when compared with that of Eusebius anticipates a contrast between Jerusalem and Caesarea, which shall fully manifest itself under their successors Cyril (348–87) and Acacius (*c.* 340–60). It is not simply a question of theological differences, as we already know, since these intersect with jurisdictional problems, the see of Jerusalem already striving to obtain an independent status from the metropolitan see of Caesarea.[83]

Under the reign of Constantius II (337–61), Acacius, following in the footsteps of his predecessor, was one of the leaders of the eastern episcopate, promoting at several councils a theological line similar to that of Eusebius and influencing important political decisions. A biblical scholar in the tradition of Origen's school, he had no problems in siding occasionally with his pro-Nicene adversaries. Cyril in his turn had originally been installed on the throne of Jerusalem with the help of Acacius and his semi-Arian party. Despite that, he afterward joined the 'homeousians', the group that would finally promote a new appropriation of Nicea's 'consubstantial' (*homoousios*), and paid for this new affiliation with frequent exiles from his episcopal see. Theologically, Cyril voices a Christological perspective essentially based on the Bible and tradition, but not entirely devoid of a new sensibility toward the trinitarian developments. Thus his thought betrays traces of Origenist heritage, including the theology of the Logos, while reflecting otherwise the gradual abandonment of the subordinationist approach in the relation between Son and Father.[84]

Another protagonist of the Arian crisis about whom we hear among the Palestinian bishops in the first half of the fourth century was Patrophilus of Scythopolis. Together with Eusebius of Caesarea he was a teacher in biblical studies for Eusebius of Emesa, a renowned Syriac exegete, thus assuring an important link between the Alexandrian heritage and the Antiochene 'school'.[85]

[82] O. Irshai, 'The Jerusalem Bishopric and the Jews in the Fourth Century: History and Eschatology', in *Jerusalem — Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism* (see note 2, above), pp. 204–20 (p. 208), emphasizes the role of the Jerusalem Church from the outset of the Arian controversy as 'a bastion of orthodoxy'.

[83] Rubin, 'The Church of the Holy Sepulchre'; Rubin, 'The See of Caesarea in Conflict with Jerusalem from Nicaea (325) to Chalcedon (451)', in *Caesarea Maritima* (see note 13, above), pp. 559–74.

[84] M. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV sec.* (Roma, 1975), pp. 208–09; Perrone, 'Four Gospels, Four Councils', pp. 372–77.

[85] Socrates of Constantinople, *HE* 2.9, 3.

At Nicaea Patrophilus had tried without success to defend Arius, but in the aftermath of the council he was, together with Acacius, one of the most influential exponents of the 'homeans'. Around 360, when the conflicting parties came to debate the question of the divinity of the Spirit, Patrophilus — like Acacius — denied it.[86]

Apart from these emerging figures and their public activity, inside Palestine and abroad, especially on the occasion of the numerous synods that were held to solve the crisis, it is difficult for us to measure the effective impact of the Arian controversy on the Palestinian Church. It seems that the struggle mainly invested the sphere of the episcopal hierarchy, or more generally the institutional and theological levels, rather than extending itself to other strata of the Christian community. After all, the repercussions of this debate which we can perceive in the *Prebaptismal Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem are not as dominant as we could expect, inasmuch as the theological concerns of the preacher address a variety of enemies and doctrinal errors: Marcellians, Sabellians, and neo-Arians are flanked by Jews, pagans, and Manichaeans.[87] Moreover we have no traces of monastic involvement in the controversy. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the *Life of Hilarion* is silent precisely on the saint's attachment to orthodoxy in opposition to Arianism, contrary, for instance, to the image of Antony transmitted by Athanasius in his *Life*.

The situation seems to be different toward the end of the fourth century, when the first Origenist crisis broke out in 393. The fighting fronts now included both episcopal protagonists and monastic actors: on the one hand, as supporters of Origen, John, the bishop of Jerusalem (387–417), together with Melania the Elder and Rufinus, two prominent westerners conducting an ascetic existence on the Mount of Olives; on the other hand, as their adversaries, Epiphanius of Salamis (Cyprus), a native of Eleutheropolis and a former monk there, and Jerome, another Latin monk and a leading intellectual of the Western Church, who had settled in Bethlehem.[88] Debating about Origen was not a new chapter: in the first decade of the fourth century, Pamphilus of Caesarea, with the assistance of his disciple Eusebius, had written an *Apology* on behalf of the great Alexandrian doctor who was under attack both for his allegorical interpretation and for some of his most controversial doctrines such as the pre-existence and

[86] Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, p. 595.

[87] Cf. Irshai, 'Cyril of Jerusalem', p. 99.

[88] Cf. E. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1993).

final redemption of all rational beings.[89] These issues were the focus of the conflict which opposed Jerome, previously an admirer of Origen, to the bishop of Jerusalem, who in this circumstance took offence from Epiphanius's ordination of Paulinianus, Jerome's brother, without his permission. For a while the Latin monastic communities of Bethlehem were cut off from the church of the Holy City, as a consequence of the ban on them, and had to look elsewhere for their religious needs, finding support in Diospolis. A reconciliation between the monk of Bethlehem and his bishop, which took place on Christmas 397, did not yet appease the conflict, further nourished by Rufinus's translation of Origen's dogmatic masterwork *Perì archôn* (On the first principles) and Jerome's virulent reaction. In this controversy the monastic audience was involved from the start, inasmuch as it all began with an attempt to obtain from the monasteries in and around Jerusalem a condemnation of Origen. Not a few monks cut themselves off from John, while the Palestinian bishops were exhorted by Epiphanius to do the same.[90]

The same constellation of forces would again come to the fore, but on a larger scale and with more disruptive consequences, during the Christological controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries. It is not easy to define the premises Palestine had set of its own for this series of conflicts, for instance with regard to the debate on Apollinarianism. We have only a few traces in the last two or three decades of the fourth century which in any case point to a clear rejection of Apollinarian Christology with its denial of a human soul in Christ.[91] The most significant witness is indeed a later one, a profession of faith by John of Jerusalem, probably composed in the aftermath of the Pelagian crisis because of the special attention it pays to anthropology and soteriology, or perhaps submitted directly to the Synod of Diospolis (415).[92] In this local assembly the Palestinian bishops discussed the doctrines of the British monk Pelagius, who successfully defended himself from the accusations levelled against his doctrine

[89] E. Prinzivalli, 'The Controversy about Origen before Epiphanius', in *Origeniana Septima* (see note 77, above), pp. 195–213.

[90] According to Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 46, six hundred monks were reconciled to the Church thanks to the intervention of Melania and Rufinus. See also the view of Jerome in *Contra Iohannem* 1.4.

[91] Perrone, *La chiesa di Palestina*, pp. 60–63.

[92] M. Kohlbacher, 'Vom Enkel des Origenes zum Vater der Chalcedongegner: Einleitungsfragen zum Lehrbekenntnis des Johannes von Jerusalem (CPG 3621)', in *Origeniana Septima* (see note 77, above) pp. 655–72.

of grace by Augustine and Jerome so that the synod abstained from condemning his person. John's profession of faith significantly insists on the truth of Christ's physical and spiritual sufferings while stressing the presence in him of a rational soul, most probably out of an anti-Apollinarian concern. In any event, we miss the doctrinal context of John's creed and more specifically its relation to the two main currents which would confront each other during the Christological controversies: the Alexandrian tradition of Christ as *Logos-sarx* and the Antiochene one based on the scheme *Logos-anthropos*, respectively known for sake of simplicity as 'Monophysite' and 'diphysite' as far as the dogmatic formulation of Christ as God-man was concerned.

Nevertheless, if we consider the position adopted by the bishops and the monks of the Holy Land in the course of the Christological conflicts, we should assume that the orientation prevailing in Palestine during the first decades of the fifth century was closer to Alexandrian Christology than to the Antiochene one. To prove such proximity, among other things, we may recall the writings of Hesychius, the 'teacher of the Church' in Jerusalem and the most relevant author of this period, who exegetically and theologically shared the Alexandrian approach, albeit not without some originality of outlook.[93] Initially the convergence with Alexandria was also a political necessity for the strategy of Juvenal, who was seeking recognition of patriarchal status for his Jerusalem see, not only against the rights of the metropolitan bishop in Caesarea but even more against the patriarch of Antioch. Juvenal led the delegations of the Palestinian episcopate in the two councils of Ephesus and in that of Chalcedon. Even before his formal recognition as patriarch on the eve of Chalcedon, the bishop of Jerusalem enjoyed a particular authority among the supporters of Cyril of Alexandria.[94] In both councils of Ephesus he was the faithful ally of the Alexandrian patriarchs, siding first with Cyril against Nestorius of Constantinople and the Antiochenes in 431, and then in 449 with Dioscorus, Cyril's successor, both in support of the condemned Eutyches and once more against the Antiochenes. Yet the alliance with Alexandria was severed by Juvenal

[93] See E. Zocca, 'La lebbra e la sua purificazione nel *Commentario al Levitico* di Esichio: Un tentativo di confronto con la tradizione esegetica precedente e contemporanea', *Annali di storia dell'esegesi*, 13 (1996), 179–99; S. Tampellini, 'Introduzione allo studio del *Commentarius in Leviticum* di Esichio di Gerusalemme' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Bologna, 1998).

[94] On Juvenal's political role during the first stage of the Christological controversy , cf. Honigmann, 'Juvenal of Jerusalem'.

two years later, at Chalcedon, as the constellation of power, under the new Emperor Marcianus, was no longer favourable to his party. This time Juvenal, who was risking his see and the newly acquired patriarchal rights, abandoned his former ally Dioscorus and went over to the camp of his adversaries comprising Anatolius of Constantinople, the Roman legates, and the majority of the eastern episcopate together with the Antiochenes.[95]

Though Juvenal always played an uncontested role of leader in these assemblies, his protagonism does not entirely efface the participation of the other Palestinian bishops. Due also to the political engagement of the patriarch, they were called upon to intervene in a more active manner compared to other episcopates, even if they generally refrained from too unilateral expressions of doctrinal concerns. Thus in 431, while approving Nestorius's condemnation, they abstained from embracing an aggressive pro-Cyrillian stand. Also, in the 'robbery-synod' of Ephesus in 449 we can perceive a certain moderation in the Palestinian episcopate, starting with the patriarch himself. Over against such premises we ought not to regard the volte-face at Chalcedon, vividly recorded by the council's proceedings, as totally unexpected. On the other hand, this primarily political move does not imply indifference to the doctrinal aspects, inasmuch as precisely this council provides us with the clearest pronouncement of a theological nature. Actually the Palestinian bishops did not hide their perplexities in face of the *Tomus*, the letter sent by Pope Leo to Flavian of Constantinople and used as a basis for the definition of Chalcedon, and asked for an explanation so that they might be convinced of its correctness. The formal response to their inquiries, based on the vindication of a convergence between Cyril's texts and the Pope's letter, already anticipated the terms of the theological debate in the century after Chalcedon and of the specific contribution the Palestinian Church would offer it.

All this notwithstanding, the choice of the Palestinian bishops was perceived as treason by the majority of the monks and by the public opinion influenced by their polemical feelings, first and foremost Empress Eudocia.[96] Led by Theodosius,

[95] For the history of these councils, see my contribution 'Da Nicea (325) a Calcedonia (451): I primi quattro concili ecumenici — istituzioni, dottrine, processi di ricezione', in *Storia dei concili ecumenici*, ed. by G. Alberigo (Brescia, 1990), pp. 11–118 (pp. 71–107). I have provided a more detailed analysis of Juvenal's conduct and the role played by the Palestinian episcopate in these councils in 'I vescovi palestinesi'.

[96] Cf. Perrone, *La chiesa di Palestina*, pp. 89–103; A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, 2 vols, I: *Das Konzil von Chalkedon (451) — Rezeption und Widerspruch*

who as an eyewitness of Chalcedon had divulged the news of Juvenal's 'apostasy' even before the return of the patriarch to the Holy Land, the monks revolted against the bishops. Theodosius usurped the throne of Jerusalem from the beginning of 452 until august 453 and with him new bishops were installed in the other dioceses instead of the legitimate ones. We do not know what kind of theological pedigree determined the monks to adopt their rebellious conduct, apart from supposing a strong adherence to the doctrines of Cyril of Alexandria and his profession of a 'unique nature' (*mia physis*) of the Incarnate Word.[97] Despite the international appearance typical of Palestinian monasticism from the start, the revolt can probably be seen as an indicator of the traditional ties both with the Alexandrian tradition and Egyptian monasticism.[98] As a matter of fact, after Marcianus's repression of the revolt, many of the rebels found a refuge in Egypt, the most illustrious of them being Peter the Iberian, a prince of Georgian origin who lived as a monk near Gaza.

There were some exceptions to the protest of the monks against their bishops: Euthymius, for instance, remained loyal to Juvenal, thus prefiguring the pro-Chalcedonian orientation of the monasteries in the Judaean Desert which would take the lead at the threshold of the sixth century. Once more, it is difficult to offer a precise reconstruction of the process by which the Church of Palestine became a bastion of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Practically, a series of factors converged toward this result. First, we should mention the political moderation on the part of Patriarch Juvenal after his return to Jerusalem, leading in short to reconciliation with the official Church of Empress Eudocia, and a portion of the clergy and the monks in the so-called 'first union' (456).[99] This moderate policy at the institutional level represented the dominant note for the greater part of the half century after Chalcedon, thus fostering a 'second union' under Patriarch Martyrius (478–86). Then, as a second factor, there was the 'ecumenical' status of Jerusalem as the Holy City, attracting pilgrimage from everywhere. Despite

(451–518) (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1986).

[97] J.-E. Steppa, *John Rufus and the World Vision of Anti-Chalcedonian Culture* (Lund, 2001), rightly stresses that research is far from having explained the reasons of the anti-Chalcedonian monks.

[98] D. J. Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism* (London, 1966); S. Rubenson, 'The Egyptian Relations of Early Palestinian Monasticism', in *The Christian Heritage in the Holy Land*, ed. by A. O'Mahony, G. Gunner, and K. Hintlian (London, 1995), pp. 35–46.

[99] Cf. Perrone, *La chiesa di Palestina*, pp. 103–16.

occasional rigidity, such a situation favoured de facto a sort of coexistence among the different Christian creeds.[100] As a third important factor, we cannot ignore the pressures of imperial policy, although their content as well as their impact were liable to change according to the different emperors. Now, the Church of Palestine did not have to wait for Emperor Justin (518–27), who together with Justinian (527–65) promoted the restoration of Chalcedon, in order to manifest its preference precisely for this council.[101] When the policy of moderation entered into a deep crisis because of the influence exerted on Emperor Anastasius (491–518) by Severus, previously a monk in Gaza and Eleutheropolis and then Monophysite patriarch of Antioch (512–18), the monks, led by Theodosius and Sabas, were decisive in supporting Patriarch John of Jerusalem and vindicating with him fidelity to the dogma of Chalcedon (516/17).[102]

With pro-Chalcedonian monasticism we have, of course, a further factor of primary importance for the doctrinal evolution of the Church of the Holy Land. Finally, also connected with it, a new generation of theologians, both monks and clerics, expressed itself in several writings so as to assure a basis for the doctrinal choice on behalf of Chalcedon. Names like Nephalius, John of Caesarea, John of Scythopolis, and Leontius of Jerusalem mainly contributed, with their works in defence of Chalcedon, to the elaboration of 'neo-Chalcedonianism', a kind of theological synthesis between the Christology of Cyril, i.e., the undisputed authority for all Monophysites, and the Chalcedonian dogma of 'two natures in one person'. It was a way of reconciling the two antagonistic traditions of patristic Christology up to the point of proposing the equivalence of the dogmatic formulations typical of Monophysites and Chalcedonians respectively.[103] In a sense,

[100] To evaluate how doctrinal controversies influenced the practice of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, see my contribution, 'Christian Holy Places and Pilgrimage'.

[101] Steppa, *John Rufus*, p. 21, overemphasizes to my mind the influence of imperial pressure.

[102] R. L. Wilken, 'Loving the Jerusalem Below: The Monks of Palestine', in *Jerusalem — Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism* (see note 2, above), pp. 240–50; P. T. R. Gray, 'The Sabaite Monasteries and the Christological Controversies (478–533)', in *The Sabaite Heritage* (see note 8, above), pp. 237–43.

[103] For a general presentation of the Palestinian theology in Byzantine times, cf. P. T .R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (431–533)* (Leiden, 1979); Perrone, *La chiesa di Palestina*, pp. 223–85; Perrone, 'L'impatto del dogma di Calcedonia sulla riflessione teologica fra IV e V concilio ecumenico', in *Storia della teologia*, I: *Epoca patristica*, ed. by A. di Berardino and B. Studer (Casale Monferrato, 1993), pp. 515–81; Perrone, 'Four Gospels, Four Councils', pp. 383–94.

this theological line found official consecration in the second ecumenical Council of Constantinople, so that we may consider Palestinian Chalcedonianism to be an important component of Byzantine orthodoxy.

During the first half of the sixth century, theological interest among the monks was not raised uniquely by the dogmatic questions concerning Christology. The cultural appearance of Palestinian monasticism was more complex than the profile emerging from our sources, historical or rather hagiographical, both for the Monophysite camp, now in the process of disappearing, and the Chalcedonian one. The tradition of Gazan monasticism, going back to Hilarion, was represented in the first decades of the sixth century by the disciples and heirs of Peter the Iberian (d. 491), among whom were Severus of Antioch and John of Maiuma. Though we can no longer support the identification of Peter the Iberian with Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, the anonymous author of the so-called *Corpus Dionysiacum* — a work which would enjoy an enormous repercussion throughout the Middle Ages thanks to its unique synthesis of Neoplatonic and Christian mystics — Gazan monasticism, both Monophysite and Chalcedonian, maintained close contact with the lively intellectual atmosphere of the city.[104] By the way, it was precisely in Palestine that the *Corpus Dionysiacum* found its first interpreter in the person of John, the bishop of Scythopolis and a leading figure among the neo-Chalcedonian theologians of the time.[105] Even later, in Gazan monasticism, the remarkable experience of two recluses such as Barsanuphius and John, mainly dedicated to the practice of asceticism but open through their spiritual direction to the most diverse questions coming from inside and outside their coenoby of Thabatha, was not at all immune to intellectual interests, as is proven by the reading of Origen, Evagrius, and other Church Fathers.[106]

[104] Cf. M. van Esbroeck, 'Peter the Iberian and Dionysius the Areopagite: Honigmann's Thesis Revisited', *OCP*, 59 (1993), 213–27. On the theological and spiritual tradition of Gazan monasticism, see Perrone, *La chiesa di Palestina*, pp. 285–311; Perrone, 'I Padri del monachesimo di Gaza (IV–VI sec.): la fedeltà allo spirito delle origini', *La chiesa nel tempo*, 13, no. 1–2 (1997), 87–116; Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky, 'Gazan Monasticism'. Regarding specifically John of Maiuma, see my article 'Dissenso dottrinale e propaganda visionaria: Le *Pleroforie* di Giovanni di Maiuma', *Augustinianum*, 29 (1989), 451–95; and Steppa, *John Rufus*.

[105] P. Rorem and J. C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford, 1998).

[106] For an approach to the two Gazan recluses, see my contribution, 'The Necessity of Advice: Spiritual Direction as a School of Christianity in the Correspondence of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza', in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity* (see note 57, above), pp. 131–49. As for

Also, the monasticism of the Judaean Desert was in its turn far from being sensitive merely to ascetic or dogmatic concerns. The hagiographer Cyril of Scythopolis, our precious witness of this monastic life in the fifth and sixth centuries, is not at ease when recording the intellectual propensity of some monastic foundations which had their centre in the New Laura.[107] This monastery was created in 507 to host the monks who could not further bear the lifestyle of Sabas and for this reason had abandoned the Old Laura in anger and protest. Though Sabas succeeded in incorporating the new foundation into his own congregation and in controlling it until his death (532), the New Laura became a focus of 'Origenism'.[108] It is indeed not easy to exactly define the content of this term, though we know that, compared with the first Origenist crisis, the second one moved from Origen's thought to Evagrius's Gnostic writings.[109] Yet difficulties in defining the protagonists of this new controversy and their intellectual world were already felt by some contemporary observers. Initially the Origenists were essentially seen as adherents of the most controversial doctrines of Origen — the pre-existence of the rational beings and the apocatastasis — as had been the case in the previous controversy. But subsequently the more specific orientation, indebted to Evagrius, came to light. According to Cyril of Scythopolis, after the Origenists had won control of the Old Laura and in Jerusalem, their division into two parties because of diverging opinions on Christology and soteriology permitted their orthodox adversaries to

the discussion on reading Origen and Evagrius, cf. A. Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens* (Paris, 1962), pp. 124–28.

[107] On Cyril's hagiographic work, see B. Flusin, *Miracle et histoire dans l'œuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis* (Paris, 1983), and the Introduction to the Hebrew translation by Leah Di Segni, Cyril of Scythopolis, *Lives of Monks of the Judaean Desert* (Jerusalem, 2005).

[108] History and archaeology of the New Laura have been thoroughly analysed by Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 107–10; Y. Hirschfeld, 'The Physical Structure of the New Laura as an Expression of Controversy over the Monastic Lifestyle', in *The Sabaite Heritage* (see note 8, above), pp. 323–45. The contrast is resumed in Hirschfeld's words as follows: 'On one hand, there was the desire to expand the monastery building and its connections with the ecclesiastical establishment, on the other, the aspiration to conduct a life of seclusion by sufficing with little' (p. 345).

[109] I have dealt with some of the missing links in the history of the second Origenist crisis in 'Palestinian Monasticism, the Bible, and Theology in the Wake of the Second Origenist Controversy', in *The Sabaite Heritage* (see note 8, above), pp. 245–59. A new examination has now been provided by Hombergen, *Second Origenist Controversy*.

develop a tactical alliance with the more moderate ones. This led, after a first edict of Justinian (542/43), to the second and decisive condemnation of Origenism at the Council of Constantinople in 553. In the last resort, we can perhaps say that this conflict, far from simply opposing 'practical' and 'Gnostic' monks, as a consequence of the alternative between asceticism and intellectual activity, put to the test the role of monasticism as a champion of orthodoxy, in close connection with the concerns of the ecclesiastical authorities.

At the end of the Byzantine period the picture we can draw of Christianity in the Holy Land generally shows us a flourishing Church that has more or less successfully overcome its inner dissensions, first with the Monophysites and then with the Origenists, assuring its substantial unity through the vital support lent by monasticism to ecclesiastical hierarchy and to theological thought, as well as to the practice of pilgrimage. As shown by the common voice of the monks in that unique document of their fidelity both to the Church and the land represented by the letter of Theodosius and Sabas to Emperor Anastasius, they were deeply conscious of the particular status of Jerusalem and the Holy Land within the Christian world. Speaking in the name of 'Zion, the Mother of the Churches, where the great mystery of piety was revealed and accomplished for the salvation of the world', they advocated the witness of the places themselves as a warrant for the true Christian message and its faithful transmission throughout the ages: 'We, the dwellers of this Holy Land, have kept it invulnerable and inviolable in Christ, and by the grace of God, we maintain it always without being intimidated in any way by our adversaries'.[110] History is indeed the realm of the possible and not of the ideal. Yet in no other historical period could the ideological construction of the monks, despite all the wishful thinking it evidently implied, have come nearer to reality than in Byzantine Palestine.

[110] Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Sab.* 57. I quote from the English translation in Wilken, 'Loving the Jerusalem Below', p. 244.